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TAGS: [ECON](#) [ETRD](#) [EAIR](#) [PREL](#) [TU](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: TURKISH MFA ON IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION

REF: ANKARA 2817

Classified by EconCouns Scot Marciel, Reason 1.5 (b,d)

1. (C) Summary: MFA Director for Iraq Reconstruction Okcun told EconCouns April 29 that Turkey would pursue an aggressive private/public sector approach to winning reconstruction contracts in Iraq. He asked if the U.S. could help by dispelling the notion that Turkish firms were at a disadvantage due to Turkey's stance on the war, and by "matchmaking" between Turkish and U.S. firms. Okcun noted that Turkey hoped to normalize trade relations with Iraq as soon as possible, and would reopen its embassy in Baghdad the week of May 5. End summary.

2. (C) EconCouns met April 29 with MFA Director for Iraq Reconstruction Ambassador Okcun, DDG for Bilateral Economic Affairs for the Middle East/Africa Kaya Turkmen, and DDG for Bilateral Economic Affairs for the West Mehmet Gucuk. Okcun noted that the MFA's goal was to help secure the participation of Turkish companies in the reconstruction of Iraq through aggressive "public/private sector teamwork." The MFA had already established a permanent commission of eight members -- four from the private sector, four from the state sector -- to work on Iraq reconstruction issues. The commission would convene regular meetings to discuss opportunities and challenges in key sectors, i.e. transportation, banking, and oil.

3. (C) Okcun noted that participating in Iraq reconstruction would be more difficult for Turkish firms than it had been in Afghanistan. He said the GOT would pursue an aggressive approach, and would encourage the private sector to do the same. He asked if the U.S. could help in this effort by taking steps to dispel the persistent notion in the press and the private sector that Turkish firms were at a disadvantage due to Turkey's stance on the war. Okcun also requested U.S. assistance in "matchmaking" between Turkish and U.S. firms, perhaps by organizing a reconstruction conference in Turkey, as we had done in the Afghanistan case.

4. (C) Okcun noted that Turkey planned to resume normal trade relations with Iraq as soon as possible. To this end, the government hoped to open a second border gate to help ease the traffic through Harbur gate, but needed an interlocutor on the Iraqi side in order to proceed with the plan. Okcun said the GOT also hoped to extend a railway line directly across the Iraqi border. The current railway system, he said, went through Syria first and then into Iraq. He expected Turkish Airlines would also be interested in resuming flights to Baghdad whenever that became possible.

5. (C) On other Iraq-related issues, DG Turkmen noted that the GOT was planning on reopening its embassy -- staffed with a skeleton crew for now -- in Baghdad the week of May 5. Okcun said he understood that other countries were planning on sending representatives to work with ORHA, and Turkey also wanted to one to two officials. He said the MFA would contact us when its proposal was more firm. Okcun claimed there was an understanding following Secretary Powell's visit that we would help arrange a meeting for GOT officials with General Garner. He said the GOT was willing to send a delegation to Baghdad as soon as possible for such a meeting.
PEARSON